JOHN'S MOTHER.

It all began through a cherry-tart. "Nothing comes up to my mother's pastry," was the unwise remark of John Beechunt, who ought to have known that once he was married, his wife's tarts and puddings were the best the world could hold for *him*.

Now young Mrs. Beechunt had made that particular tart with her own fair hands, and, though John partook of two helpings, and casually mentioned she might put some away for his supper, that imprudent remark concerning "mother's pastry" was as a crumpled rose-leaf in his young wife's happy lot. Dear me! what a superior sort of person his mother must be! No doubt John often mentally compared his wife's house-keeping with that of the elder Mrs. Beechunt, and missed the perfection to which he had evidently been accustomed in his early days. And when for the first time there came round the annual revolution of spring-cleaning, and John offered a few remarks as to methods and customs adopted "at home," the secret bitterness took deeper root, and prejudice increased to real dislike towards "John's mother."

"It is a good thing she lives so far away," thought Doris, whose own home nestled beside a suburban common; "nothing can be more disagreeable than a mother-in-law always in and out, prying and fault-finding, magnifying every little cloud, and making one's husband dissatisfied. I know that is the way with

mothers'-in-law; I hope Mrs. Beechunt and myself will continue 'strangers yet.'"

And even the testimony of her particular friend, a contemporary bride, as to the splendid help and unselfish affection of *her* mother-in-law did not alter the opinion of John's wife.

"Exceptions prove the rule," she thought, "and I feel convinced Mrs. Beechunt would render my life miserable if I came into contact with her domestic perfections."

So it will be seen the cherry-tart, or rather John's forgetfulness of the saying, "Comparisons are odious," had much to answer for, and set influences working that were far from amiable.

As yet Mrs. Beechunt, sen., and her son's wife had never met; the old couple lived with their elder son on the old home-farm down in Sussex, and a journey to London would have borne to them the aspect of emigration. John had early shown business capacities, and held a responsible post in the City; his honeymoon could only last from Saturday to Monday, but he promised himself a summer holiday at Dingleside with the wife of whom he felt so proud, and whom he longed to introduce to his friends. Doris was the niece of one of his employers, well educated, and a splendid musician; he mentally compared her with the choice of his brother Samuel, and, like the good husband he was, he decided his own wife carried off the palm in every particular.

What a pity he did not speak out and tell her so! She often imagined he wished she made cheese like Esther, or could turn her dresses again and again like her mother-in-law. In her secret heart, Doris believed he desired her to be anything and everything save what she *could* be, while all the time he was telling his London friends about his snug little home, and his "little woman," and congratulating himself daily that Doris was Mrs. J. Beechunt.

John's summer holiday came round, but Doris had made up her mind that Dingleside would be unendurable; she decided to visit her aunt and uncle at Brighton. In vain John coaxed; remonstrated, almost lost his temper; visit his relations she would not—that cherry-pie yet rankled in her mind, and self-will was her failing. On the afternoon of his departure John came down from London in the rain, and spent the time that should have been used in changing his things in a last endeavour to obtain her company; she saw him go off at last, sullenly declaring he had only just time to catch his train—he could not stop to put on thicker boots.

Doris felt conscience-stricken, and a poor sort of wife altogether, but she pictured him well looked after by the mother of whom he so often boasted, and she commenced her preparations for Brighton. The next evening, however, she received a telegram, "Come to Dingleside; John is ill," and Brighton passed into oblivion.

Doris knew not how she started on that never-to-be-forgotten journey; she seemed to take her ticket and enter the train in a dream, and, though she tried to read, and there were sweet thoughts in the magazines she opened that would have reminded her of the ever-present Helper, her thoughts were far away from the papers she held, as the train steamed on through the night.

"John's mother" proved to be gentle and silver-haired, timid of the London bride, and consequently rather awkward and constrained. Old Mr. Beechunt and Samuel welcomed her frankly and heartily, but her sister-in-law, Esther, was extremely shy at first, and the visitor's pride did not help matters. John was suffering from a mild attack of pleurisy, and Doris reproached herself for having parted from him in temper, and not having seen that his wet things were changed ere he travelled to Dingleside. She felt very jealous of his mother's presence in the sick-room, and showed so openly her intention to monopolise the nursing, that Mrs. Beechunt gradually surrendered and withdrew.

"You and mother don't seem to get on," said John, anxiously, one day. "I thought you would get so fond of one another, Doris, and that mother would teach you no end of her famous little dishes, and put you up to a lot of dodges that house-keepers like to know. I wish you would ask her for her recipe for 'velvet cream'; it's something with lemons in, and I think there's isinglass."

"I have an excellent cookery-book, the wedding-gift of my Aunt Grigsberg; no doubt the recipe is there," was his wife's impatient reply. "I am sorry for your disappointment, if you expected us to fall into each other's arms, but our natures are too much unlike to have anything in common. If you intended to marry to please Mrs. Beechunt, you should have chosen somebody like Esther."

This parting shot ended the threatened conversational battle, for John looked worried, and, bestowing upon the invalid a contrite kiss, Doris sat down to read to him till his eyes closed in slumber.

Sorrow was the peace-maker that at last thawed the ice between mother and daughter. A few days later there came damp, chilly weather, and the pleurisy suddenly took a turn for the worse; the country doctor looked grave, and expressed a wish to consult a physician, who seemed to think the state of things serious. John became exhausted and excitable, and Doris tarried with him day and night in sharp anxiety, unheeding the look in his mother's face, which seemed to implore a share in nursing her dear one.

At last one day Esther, bringing up some beef-tea, found Doris sobbing despairingly behind the curtain.

"He is light-headed," she said, brokenly; "he has always known me until to-day. Oh, Esther, I *know* I shall lose him—I have killed him through my wicked temper—oh, my darling, my darling, if only I could have the last month over again! but it is too late—John is dying."

"Doris," said Mrs. Samuel, calling her for the first time by her Christian name, "with God there is nothing impossible; mother's prayers for poor John will be answered, I feel certain. You are worn out, my dear; come and lie on the couch in the next room—you will excite him if he hears you cry."

"Yes, come and lie down, Doris; we will call you when he rouses," said John's mother, who had wistfully lingered on the threshold of the room, and now came forward and took her daughter's trembling hand; "you have nursed him splendidly, but you will break down unless you sleep. We shall not lose him, my child; there is nothing too hard for the God who heareth prayer."

"Pray for him; ask God to forgive me, mother," sobbed Doris, and she felt the old lady's tears upon her face as mother and daughter kissed each other for the first time, and Doris laid down her head on that kind, protecting breast. She had never known a mother's love; henceforth she was to prove its unpriced worth.

Mrs. Beechunt and Esther tucked her up tenderly on the couch, and she sank into the sleep of utter exhaustion; when she woke she was braver for her nursing duties, and John's case did not seem to her so hopeless as before. Earnest prayers rose constantly on his behalf; the great Physician was pleased to restore him from the gates of death, and his convalescence was a very happy one. Doris somehow seemed to him dearer than ever, a new sweetness, born of

humility, revealing itself in her looks and ways; when he came downstairs, he often found her busy in the kitchen, imbibing many a useful hint from Mrs. Beechunt and Esther, while they in their turn were rested and comfort d, together with the male members of the family, when Doris sat down to the old piano, and softly drew forth its music.

Knowing each other better, the old heart and the young had lost mistrust and prejudice; the shadow of dread had not fallen upon Dingleside in vain.

"Our mother is the sweetest in the world; how I wish we could have her here!" Doris said to John, when they were back in London, and she was aided by the wise, tender letters Mrs. Beechunt had not found courage to write before, being occasionally forgetful as to her spelling. And the young wife's wish was fulfilled before another year was over; the old lady packed up all sorts of good things, armed herself with a sweet, capacious nosegay, and presented herself one day at Rose Cottage, braving all the perils of the metropolis. And if ever a wonderful grandchild looked into admiring eyes, it was the bonnie maiden that Doris held up wistfully for the blessing of "John's mother."

M. S. H.

EARNESTNESS.

There's many a good bit of work done with a sad heart, but never one with a half heart. If we would carve out a future worth living; if we would win honour and success, we must eschew indifferentism and be, above all things, in earnest. The sin of the Laodiceans was never more fatal to progress than in these days of close competition and hard bargaining. If we look at the men who have achieved their ends, we shall find they were men desperately in earnest. The Puritans of the Commonwealth time, for example, whatever their faults, could not count among them lukewarmness. They contended fiercely and passionately for their rights, ready even to trample pitilessly upon those who stood in their way. All great successes have been won in this way, by that spirit in a man which refuses to be overpowered, but cries out—

"What's failure or success to me?
I have subdued my life to the one purpose."

Lack of earnestness breeds indecision—that cause of so much life-failure. The old saying, "He who hesitates is lost," holds a world of truth. It has its illustration in Longfellow's schoolmaster, Mr. Churchill, who missed so many opportunities for good work because he dreamed of it and spent so much time in mere preparation to begin. "Whilst he mused the fire burned—in other people's brains."

Yet even upon this matter a word of caution may be given; we must not allow our earnestness to become over-earnestness, to drive us forward without any period of cessation. We must remember that our brains, and the brains of nine-tenths of our fellow-creatures, are so constructed that they need rest and relaxation; that they cannot endure the strain of uninterrupted earnestness in business pursuits and conversation. It gives ease to mind, heart and life to indulge in harmless "talk about nothing in particular" over dinner, afternoon tea, or at that idlest of all times, the hour before bed-time. To discuss the incidents of the day lightly and gaily, to laugh at our discomforts together, and be hopeful about our misfortunes, will help us through much that is unpleasant. Queen Elizabeth spoke wisely when she said, "They pass best through the world who trip over it lightly." A merry jest or a kindly joke is like a life-boat, bearing us over many a rough sea.

Solomon has left on record his opinion that "there is a time to laugh and a time to weep," a time to be merry and joyous, a time to be grave and in earnest. Yet, in spite of Solomon's reputation for wisdom, there are people who would teach us by their example that the wisest course is to be steadily, persistently, unceasingly in earnest about something or somebody. They usually have a favourite hero or pet subject upon which they have read and studied thoroughly, but often their knowledge is varied and by no means superficial, and such knowledge they are always ready to trot, nay, to gallop, out for the benefit of the world about them.

These uniformly earnest people are generally social failures; they seldom succeed in entertaining their companions, for well and interestingly as they make talk, you have but to watch the faces of their listeners to tell when boredom creeps on and a desire makes itself felt that a fit of society twaddle might smite the orator. They absolutely cannot talk "small-talk," and they would not if they could. Indeed, they secretly despise those who do, and consider it a sign of the deterioration of the race that *vers de société* are more popular than epic poems. I know such a man, and though I admire his common sense, his intelligence, his fund of useful and even profound knowledge, I must own that an hour's converse with him is an exhausting ordeal. A saucy girl-friend said of him, that "should she ever become his wife her very first task would be to teach him to talk small-talk." I could not but confess that it would vastly promote his popularity and social success.

The truly earnest man, with a purpose in life, has no need to fear relaxation. Its influence upon him will not be distracting or enervating as upon one with little taste or inclination for work, but stimulating and strengthening for fresh endeavour. From our infancy we have been taught that if all play and no work make Jack an idle boy, so all work and no play make him a dull one, and a very dismal companion to boot.

Let us attempt then that most difficult of all tasks—to strike the golden mean—"be not too grave or gay"; but give our whole mind earnestly to the work which is given us to do, knowing when nature bids us relax our efforts, and obeying her command.

Isabel Suart Robson.

KARNSAPURAM; OR, VILLAGE WORK IN INDIA.

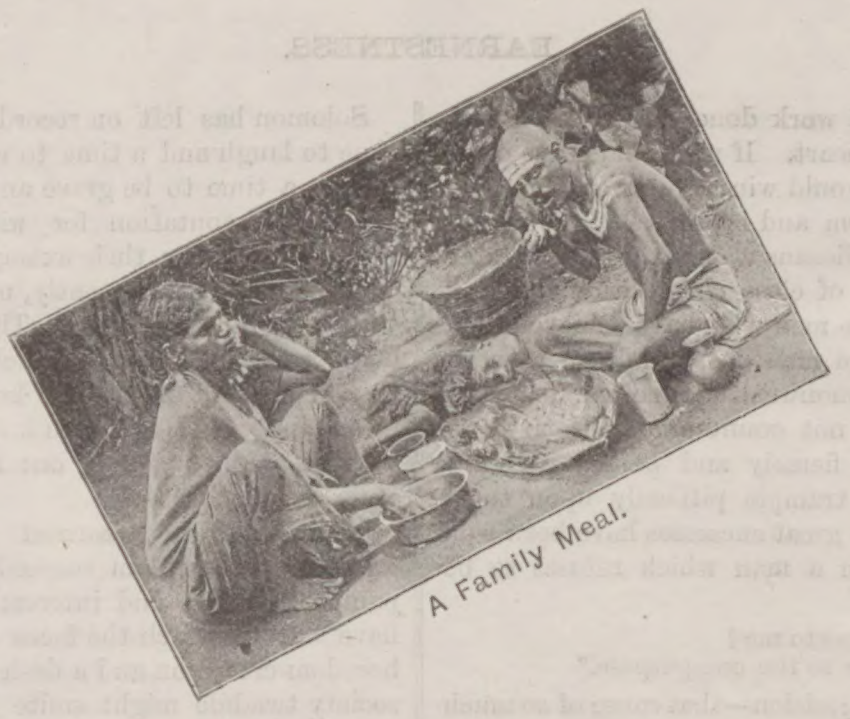
BY MARY CAVALIER.

During our stay in India we had many opportunities of seeing the native people in their village life. One day we started, with our two small children and native ayah (to look after them), for a village seven miles distant from where we lived.

We intended to camp out for a few days in order to work amongst the people. It was pleasant at four o'clock in the morning in our Bullock Bandy, for we could enjoy the cool air at that early hour, and hoped to reach our destination before the scorching rays of an Eastern sun should make the journey terribly hot and uncomfortable. Getting near Karnsapuram (the name of the village) we found ourselves in a sandy plain, and alighted from the Bandy in order to walk over the loose sand, for the bullocks could not draw the Bandy through it. We threaded our way through a Palmyra palm grove, and were even then glad of some shade from the sun's rays. The breeze was gently stirring the flakey leaves of the palm as we came in sight of the village. Our tent was placed near the river, and within the shade of some fine trees, which skirted the edge. The children were delighted with their novel dwelling, and amused themselves by peering into every corner of the tent. Having arranged our small abode, we hastened away in order to see something of the people.

A Native Girl.

Karnsapuram, we saw, was a place wholly given to idolatry. There were several Devil Temples, and a very large Mohammedan Mosque. Under almost every tree we saw either a large cone-shaped stone or a hideous idol, and many of the villagers were worshipping them by throwing garlands of flowers around them, or offering rice, ghee, fruit, or whatever they could afford, to the idols. The Church Missionary Society had established a small boys' school in the village which my husband inspected; then we wended our way back again to our tent. We were amused to see the curiosity with which the natives watched all our proceedings. Women have freedom in these small villages, and many were returning from the river with their water-vessel, or chatty, as it is called, poised on their side. Passing the tent, they stopped to gaze at the two white children, who seemed to create quite a sensation! Neither English lady or children had ever been seen in their midst before.



A Family Meal.

Mother and Child.

We had seen our native servant preparing some food in the open air by means of a wood fire burning on the sand between two bricks. We were thankful to have a cup of tea, and were not disconcerted when we found that the eggs had been boiled in the kettle, and then the water had been used to make our tea, thus doing double duty! The heat became very great, and by eleven o'clock the thermometer stood at 105° in the shade; but as large numbers of the people had come around the tent, my husband gathered them together and gave them an address on the Good Shepherd in their own language.

In the afternoon we had our chairs placed under the shade of the large trees, and spoke to the people who were going to and coming from the river. It was a good opportunity to tell them the "Old, old, story."

The women wore quantities of jewellery made from a peculiar metal; it was not so bright or glittering as gold or silver would have been. Their ears were covered with jewels; I counted twenty rings hanging from one woman's ear; she had also seven necklaces, anklets, and a ring on almost every toe! The saree or cloth is worn wound round them and a piece of it taken over the head when out of doors. Presently we were startled by a great splashing in the water. The river was shallow just then, as it was the dry season, and numbers of men and boys had rushed in, and standing close together, formed a sort of bridge of heads right across; lower down the river the same thing was done, namely, another line of men and boys stood. From the mouth of each person hung a basket made from the useful leaf of the palm tree. The lines of men and boys stood so close together that the fish could not escape down the river, and were thus enclosed and ready to be caught. Now, each one in the water began to fish with both hands, grasping

An Indian Railway Station.

any fish that they could, and popping each one into the basket suspended from the mouth. Truly a novel proceeding! One boy came out of the water and showed us that his flat basket was nearly full of fish ready to be curried for the evening meal.

Later on we went again into the village, and I visited a Mohammedan dwelling. A woman led me through a long dark passage into the courtyard. She had gathered together many of the women of Karnsapuram who were anxious to see the English lady. They asked so many questions about my dress, etc. Was I married? Had I any boys? When I replied to the latter question in the affirmative, great was their delight. One woman brought a large piece of wood and asked me to stand on it, saying as the gods had so graciously smiled on me I must not stand on the same level with the bullocks. These animals were in a corner of the courtyard, and the fowls were pecking up grain from the winnowing basket which a woman had laid on the ground for a while. I asked them to listen to me, and then I spoke to them of Jesus and His love. Some laughed, others agreed it was very good, and not like the stories of their gods, always so hideous and degrading to womanhood.

A sad-looking woman stopped me, and, holding up towards me the palms of her hands, said, "Look at my hands; they are hard and horny with beating out the paddy (or rice). I have used them, but my head has never been used, and now I cannot learn."

They were anxious to have a teacher, and it made me very sad to learn that out of 2,500 women and girls in that village not *one* could read or write. Would that more of England's daughters, who often pass their time in ease and idleness, would rouse themselves and take up the glorious and happy work of carrying the glad news of salvation to their sisters in the distant villages of India.

"Is it too light a thing? Will not one rise and go,
Laying her joys aside, as her Master laid them down;
Seeking His lost and lone in the veiled abodes of woe,
Winning His Indian gems, to shine in His glorious crown?"

THE MISSES BRENTHAM.

BY P. A. BLYTH,

Author of "Paul Porter and his Brothers," "Broken Reeds," etc.

CHAPTER V.

THE OTHER MARY.

As Charles Stanley entered the drawing-room, he discovered that he was not alone. At the table sat a lady, apparently sorting some wools lying before her. She looked up as Charles Stanley entered, and at once he recognised the cousin he had last seen going off by train from the little railway station. He bowed and thought he had the pleasure of speaking to Miss Brentham—he remembered her name was the same as her cousin's.

The lady rose and came forward as, with an easy grace peculiar to her, she said, "I think we are not quite strangers, Mr. Stanley; I remember meeting you one evening at Mr. Robinson's, though I was not then formally introduced to you."

She remembered him. Instinctively he felt a sense of gratification at the fact. Then as he took the chair proffered him, he sat unconsciously watching her, as resuming her seat at the table, her fingers once more stirred over the wools, evidently searching for some missing shade. In contrast with the bright colours, her hands looked soft and white, and rings—they might have been very common or exceedingly valuable, Charles Stanley was no accurate judge of such things—flashed and glittered on her fingers. Her dress, too, was graceful and tasty. Miss Brentham herself was always particularly plainly dressed, but Charles Stanley had never felt surprised at that fact, he knew enough of such matters to be aware that showiness of apparel is by no means a necessary accompaniment of wealth; but the grace and refinement of attire of the lady before him was only in strict accordance with her general bearing and appearance. There was something about her which seemed incompatible with the idea of poverty, the widowed mother and straitened means. But all this ought to have been nothing to Charles Stanley, it was doubtless almost treasonable of him to indulge any such speculations concerning her.

Then followed a few commonplace remarks on the weather and such usual topics, when the door opened and Mrs. Brentham entered.

Charles Stanley had from the first considered Mrs. Brentham a woman of much energy and sprightliness of disposition; but as she came forward that evening to greet him, her keen grey eyes were piercing in expression, as though seeking to penetrate into his inner thoughts and feelings. There was, too, in her whole manner an appearance of half-suppressed excitement, as though some powerful emotions were for the time being kept forcibly in decorous restraint. In fact, her warm old Irish heart was ready to beat with wild enthusiasm over the love affair thus enacted before her very eyes; but, as she often informed her friends and acquaintances, she had not lived close upon seventy years in this world for nothing, and her quick instincts and penetrative powers seldom led her astray. Therefore, though as a friend and acquaintance Charles Stanley had commended himself decidedly to her favour, as a lover—with a shake of her sagacious old head—she concluded he had not yet proved himself. She had in her own mind a certain proving process, after which, if he acquitted himself satisfactorily, the enthusiastic welcome which her quick, warm nature knew so well how to accord, would be heartily bestowed upon him. Having shaken hands with him, for a moment she eyed him keenly, then retreating a step or two, doubling one small fist, she held it up at him in an attitude of half playful menace.

"Ah, but I knew ye'd come," she said. "It's not a lover can stay away when his lady writes." But, despite the playful manner and lively tone, the words were not altogether cordial; there was a ring in her voice of almost derisive challenge. As a first step in her proving process, if Charles Stanley was the hot-headed, hot-hearted lover he ought to have been, she was giving him a good opportunity for declaring himself. But Charles Stanley was discreet rather than glowing in his sentiments; all he achieved was to utter something not quite coherent or intelligible about events of the day preventing him coming sooner.

But perhaps Mrs. Brentham admitted coherency of expression must not be expected of a man in his situation. As though he had not spoken, with another demonstrative movement of her fist, while a dewy light softened her keen eyes, "Ah," she said, softly, "but ye've chosen wisely; a jewel of a girl is our Mary."

This direct appeal certainly ought to have brought out a rapturous reply, but the lively display of feeling in the presence of a third person jarred on Charles Stanley's fastidious tastes. It must be confessed, too, even at that moment he was furtively watching the white hands upon which the rings glistened and flashed, yet seemed in such perfect accordance with the wearer. The remark sounded very applicable to her, but Charles Stanley sharply recalled his truant senses; the words were spoken of that other Mary, and, bowing to Mrs. Brentham as token of appreciation of the compliment, to the best of his ability he stammered out a lame affirmative. Still Mrs. Brentham did not seem to notice the lack of that zeal which ought to have prompted a very different reply; but the lady at the table turned and looked at him. Charles Stanley felt rather than saw the light of her clear grey eyes bent upon him with a look of half-surprised scrutiny. Mrs. Brentham, too, for the first time, seemed to become aware of the presence of her other granddaughter. "I forgot," she said, "I ought to have called her Polly. We must say Polly, now Mary, my own Mary, has come home again."

It was now Charles Stanley's turn to be surprised; the words, "has come home again," sounded enigmatic to him. Instinctively he turned towards the young lady in question.

"Are you come for a long visit this time?" he asked.

A surprised expression stole into her grey eyes. "But I always live here," she said, quietly.

"You always live here? But I—I thought ——" Charles Stanley stopped abruptly, in evident confusion.

"You thought—thought what?" interposed Mrs. Brentham quickly. Then, as though she had found the solution to the matter, she added, "Oh, I suppose I ought to have introduced you, Mr. Stanley, but I was thinking you knew her. This is Mary, my own home child, who always lives with me, Miss Brentham; though Polly, of course, poor child, has been called so during her cousin's absence. Miss Brentham, you see, has been out on a long visit, and her cousin has been keeping me company while she was away."

Charles Stanley could not reply. With blank, unseeing eyes, he sat staring straight before him. He seemed only capable of one idea. This was Miss Brentham; and if this, this was Miss Brentham, then who was the lady whom as such he had courted and won? He could not properly take in all that was told him. For a moment his thoughts whirled in terrible confusion, an observation of any kind seemed impossible; but, happily, Miss Brentham, who felt no discomfiture at her grandmother's statement of facts, answered for him. "Mr. Stanley and I are not quite strangers, grandmamma," she said. "I met him once with Polly at Mr. Robinson's."

The words thus simply spoken threw sudden light upon Charles Stanley's chaotic confusion of mind. That first evening thus recalled like a flash of light, showed him vividly his true position and the real error into which he had fallen. What had he done? Mistaken the poor cousin for the rich one, that was all. But as this fact became quite clear to his mind, utter dismay seized upon his soul. If only he could escape! Instinctively he glanced wistfully towards the closed door—that door which might at any moment open and admit the lady of his deliberate choice. Had he been given to fainting, a swooning fit would have seemed a blissful respite; but he could not faint, and he dared not flee, and Mrs. Brentham sat regarding him with her closely-scrutinising eyes.

There was only one thing in his favour. Long buffeting with untoward fortune had at least taught him one thing—a tolerable degree of self-possession. He could manage to maintain a measure of outward composure. But for that, he might have started impulsively to his feet, demanding impetuously fuller explanation. As it was, he was just able to await in silence what might follow, till he could himself find some possible way out of this terrible dilemma. Either Mrs. Brentham did not, or would not, notice in him any distraction of manner. She had seated herself opposite him, and, with her hands quietly folded in her lap, looked prepared to start off on a dissertation on her own account.

"Polly's mother, Mr. Stanley," she began, "is, I suppose you know, a widow. Doubtless Polly has told you herself something of all this?"

Charles Stanley visibly winced. Aware as he now was of his unfortunate position, the words sounded to him cruelly confirmative; but, making desperate effort towards self-composure, and assuming a formal attitude, he replied stifly, "Miss Brentham has never told me anything of her family affairs whatever."

"Ah, I dare say not," replied the vivacious old lady. "Time enough for all that, and Polly is naturally reticent. I admire reticence, Mr. Stanley."

Charles Stanley thought he himself had never so admired anything all his life before, reticence for the present trying moment seeming his only forlorn hope. He bowed gravely to Mrs. Brentham by way of assent, and she continued—

"But still, Mr. Stanley, there are times when it is best to speak out—a duty to do so; and there's a thing or two I'd like to say to you. No, don't go out, Mary, love; there's nothing but what may be said before you. But, as I was going to say, Mr. Stanley, Polly has received a letter from her mother, and she gives her consent, though her consent is a tardy one. But do you know what you are asking for, Mr. Stanley?"

Charles Stanley uttered something like a faint negative.

"Then I'll tell you. It's the mother's blessing and right hand you're asking for. Ever since when some years ago her father died, Polly has been her mother's stay and support in all things. Second mother has she been to her little brothers and sisters—there are eight of them altogether. Polly, of course, is the eldest, and some of them still are but young. But wait." Mrs. Brentham rose quickly, and going to a table on which were lying a small bundle of photos, selecting two or three, she returned and placed them before Charles Stanley. They were the various members of Polly's family—little children in short dresses and pinafores, taken

in groups, the mother singly. Mrs. Brentham specified each. "They were taken some little time back," she said, "but they are excellent likenesses."

Charles Stanley bent his perplexed face intently over the photographs as though deeply absorbed in their contemplation, in reality gazing with blank uncomprehending eyes at the new faces thus thrust before him. Mrs. Brentham allowed him to inspect them a few minutes in silence, then resuming her seat opposite him, speaking with quick, decisive utterance.

"Mr. Stanley," she said, "I don't suppose you expected wealth with your wife, and I'm going to tell you the truth. We don't want to deceive you or speak otherwise than things really are, and I say, it's not a rich wife you'll have in Polly. Indeed, Polly is poor, and her family are poor—I don't say she will always be thus"—a curiously suggestive expression twinkled for a moment in her keen eyes, "and in one sense even now Polly is rich—rich in all that is noble, and true, and good, but you cannot expect a widow left with eight children dependent on her to be able to give her daughter a marriage portion—eh, Mr. Stanley!"

But Charles Stanley did not need this final summing-up of his wife's prospects; already before his mind's-eye had arisen a vivid mental picture with painful distinctness. He saw a vision of little girls in short dresses, boys in knickerbockers or first trousers, all with an insatiable appetite for sweets, and whose fingers had uncontrollable inclination to ransack the new brother-in-law's pockets. And he a poor man himself, so poor that a wife in even medium position seemed an impossibility, but a wife under these circumstances—as the mental picture rose dictinctly to his mind's vision, so overwhelming was the sensation it produced, that his self-possession fairly deserted him. As though to escape the scene his fancy thus conjured up, he suddenly hitched his chair violently backward, while a dolorous groan of anguish escaped from his lips, a sound so unloverlike in character that it won from Mrs. Brentham an emphatic—"Eh, what, Mr. Stanley!" While the lady at the table turned and looked at him.

Again Charles Stanley felt rather than saw the light of her eyes upon him; as though her gaze fascinated him, he involuntarily turned his face towards her, and met a look that seemed to pierce through his soul, and divine his paltry designs and purposes. He felt she was looking down upon him, not scornfully—scorn or contempt were not in Mary Brentham's nature, but looking at him with that instinctive recoil which a noble nature unconsciously manifests when it comes suddenly into contact with anything base or dishonourable. As he thus met the light of her clear eyes, his own moral nature seemed sinking down, down into shady depths, while she rose above him higher, higher still, till in her simplicity of goodness she seemed looking down upon him from some height far beyond his reach, as a star on a clear night shines down into some dark, turbid pool. With a feeling like conscious shame he averted his face from her; the next moment she had risen, and silently quitted the apartment. Then Mrs. Brentham rose, and advancing close to him, with a look resolutely inquisitive, "Are you ill?" she asked.

And indeed his haggard, distressed countenance might well suggest the idea even of physical suffering. Charles Stanley looked up at her, the next moment glancing across the room his eye rested on a side table by the door, on which were his hat and gloves; enviable possessions they then seemed to him, but between him and that table stood Mrs. Brentham fiercely resolute. Evasion was no longer possible, he must face Mrs. Brentham and his dilemma, and get out of his difficulty as best he might. He rose to his feet, instinctively he felt he could answer her best standing.

"Mrs. Brentham," he said, "there has been a mistake—I mean, I have mistaken—" he stopped suddenly, not quite sure if this was what he intended to have said; "in fact, Mrs. Brentham, I fear the engagement between myself and Miss Brentham will have to be put aside; I will write to Miss Brentham, fully explaining all."

There was a look of supplicatory anguish on his face, and for a moment the expression of Mrs. Brentham's eyes softened and changed. In a tone gentle almost to tenderness, enriched unconsciously with a thrill of the old familiar native tongue, "Are you in trouble?" she asked.

"I should be, Mrs. Brentham, if this were permitted to continue, but as I have said, I will write and fully explain myself, to both you and Miss Brentham. Allow me to leave you now, and upon my return home I will write at once."

"No, you'll explain yourself here; what can be written can be spoken, and a deal easier sometimes. What did you come here for this evening, if you had anything to say that couldn't be said? Speak out, my man, what is it you mean?"

Instinctively Charles Stanley's eyes wandered towards that side table, but Mrs. Brentham kept her position in a direct line between him and the door. Still he made another desperate effort at escape. "Mrs. Brentham, I cannot explain here; you must allow me to depart, as I say, and I promise you to fulfil my word and write at once, but here I cannot enter into the subject."

He made a movement as though to pass her, but retreating a step or two and holding up one hand with emphatic gesture, she uttered so peremptory a "Stop!" that Charles Stanley had no choice but to fall back into his former position, while Mrs. Brentham fixing her eyes on the carpet, and laying one forefinger on her lips, assumed an attitude of intent cogitation. After a moment's silence she looked up, and advancing a step closer, her gleaming eyes looking searchingly into his.

"You made a mistake, you say, Mr. Stanley. Did you think our Polly was a rich woman, and now you find she is not rich, but poor and penniless, though noble and good, you want to end it all, and throw her and the engagement up?"

She spoke calmly, but there was a repression of indignation in her voice which made Charles Stanley attempt another hopeless evasion.

"Mrs. Brentham," he said, "I must decline to enter into particulars here, you must permit me to explain afterwards."

For reply Mrs. Brentham again retreated a step or two, and resumed her former thoughtful attitude. Then suddenly her face grew bright with an illuminating idea, her quick, acute mind had solved the problem aright. Again going nearer to him, that flash of triumphant conviction in her eyes:

"I have it," she said; "you mistook the poor woman for the rich one, and thought you were courting the wealthy Miss Brentham, and now you find out it is the poor cousin you have secured. That is your mistake, Mr. Stanley! Is it not?"

Perhaps guilt never looks so guilty as when suddenly confronted with the bare truth; by Charles Stanley's distorted, dismayed expression, Mrs. Brentham saw she had arrived at a correct conclusion.

"Ah, I see I am right," she said, "and you may as well speak out at once what you've got to say; no need now to go home and write it."

(*Continued on page* 161.)

An Empty Nest

The spring with buds was all abloom,
The little birds did chirp and peep;
And soft winds seemed to come and go
Like breath of one asleep.

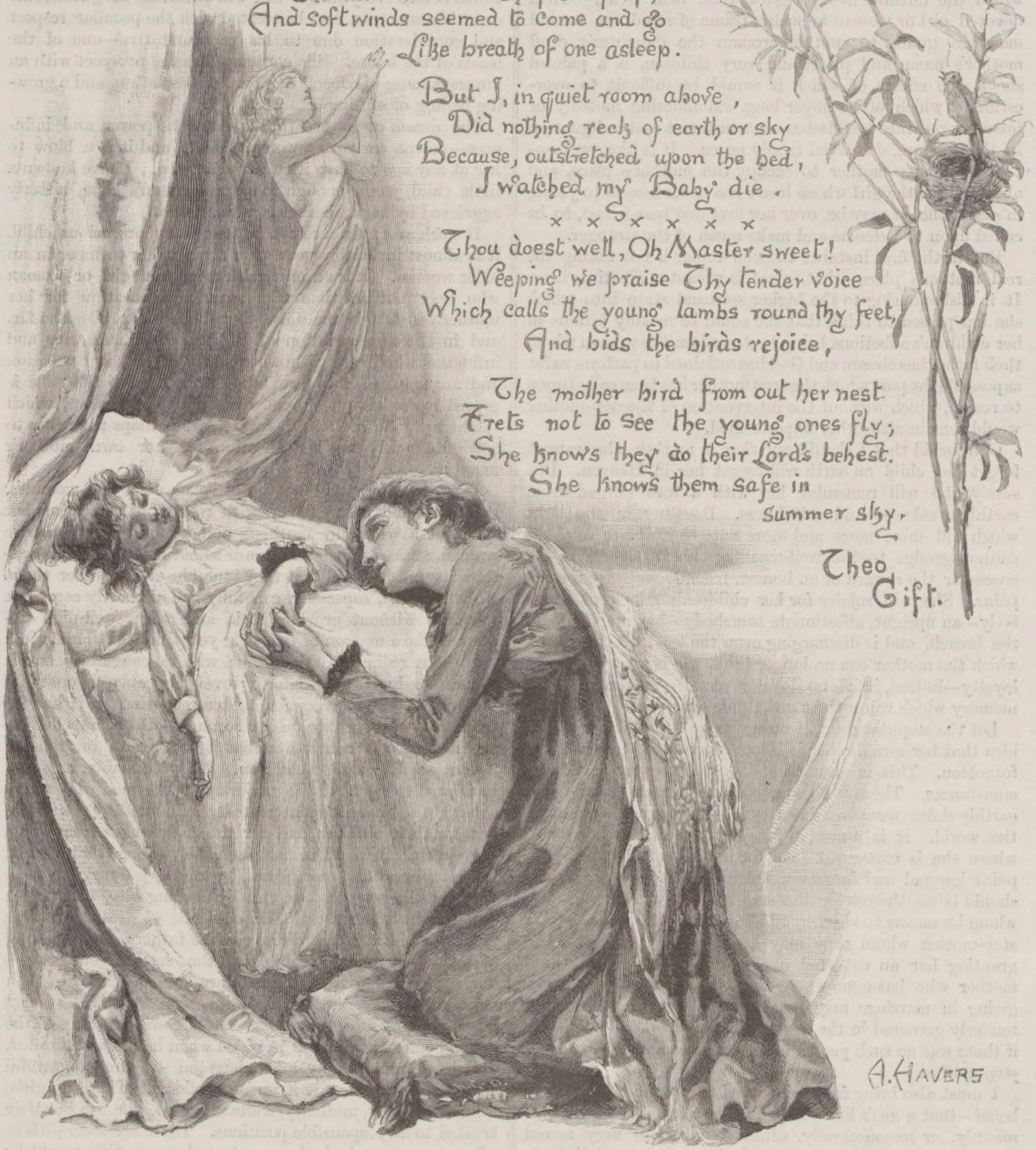
But I, in quiet room above,
Did nothing reck of earth or sky
Because, outstretched upon the bed,
I watched my Baby die.

× × × × × ×

Thou doest well, Oh Master sweet!
Weeping we praise Thy tender voice
Which calls the young lambs round thy feet,
And bids the birds rejoice,

The mother bird from out her nest
Frets not to see the young ones fly;
She knows they do their Lord's behest.
She knows them safe in summer sky.

Theo Gift.



A. Havers

KITH AND KIN IN THE OUTER CIRCLE.

BY SARAH TYTLER.

II.—THE STEP-DAUGHTER.

We have tried to understand and sympathise with the step-mother; let us now look at the relationship through the step-daughter's eyes. There is little room for doubt where her feelings are concerned if she is old enough to remember her mother, to recall her in the tender idealising spirit with which the faithful living regard their dear dead. To a devoted girl or woman in such a frame of mind the second marriage, giving to another woman the daughter's dead mother's name and place, and very children, is a painful shock, the effects of which it would be difficult to over-estimate, which often linger long, smouldering moodily or breaking out into hot flashes of resentment and indignation in the insecure, disturbed family peace. It is like profanation for a step-mother to occupy the mother's place, and above all for the girl whose heart has never ceased to yearn, in sick silence it may be, over her first and best friend, to be called upon to welcome and make much of the stranger.

But in the first instance the new-comer is not taking the real mother's place—that, alas! is vacant while time lasts. It is dishonouring to the higher spiritual state into which she has passed to think that she could be meanly jealous of her children's affections being bestowed on the woman whom their father has chosen and God has ordained to perform as far as possible the part which the true mother has been called upon to resign, which without the intervention of the step-mother would remain altogether unperformed.

God forbid that I should say that a mother who cannot forget her child on earth will forget her in Heaven. But surely she will remember her with a love purged from earthly weakness and selfishness. Dwelling in the light which will shine more and more unto the perfect day, she cannot grudge to the well-meaning, kindly efforts of her successor the reward of an honest, friendly response for her pains. She will rejoice for her children's sake that somebody—an upright, affectionate somebody—has stepped into the breach, and is discharging even the least of the duties which the mother can no longer fulfil. It is a very perverse loyalty—indeed, it is no loyalty at all—to the mother's memory which can make a girl think otherwise.

Let the step-daughter at once dismiss from her mind the idea that her own mother is being superseded, ignored, and forgotten. This is an untrue, distorted version of the circumstances. There is no superseding—in fact, the mother's earthly claims were laid down by God's will when she quitted the world. It is a morbid fancy that there can be rivalry where she is concerned. As for her being in any essential point ignored and forgotten, there is no necessity that she should be so, though her husband has taken a second wife whom he means to cherish, and her children have accepted a step-mother whom they may learn to love, in addition to granting her an extorted obedience. The first wife and mother who has gone where there is neither marrying nor giving in marriage may be as faithfully remembered and tenderly garnered in the hearts of her nearest and dearest as if there was no such person in existence as a second wife and step-mother.

I must also bring forward what I am bound to say is my belief—that a girl's lively objection to a step-mother is, consciously, or unconsciously, often founded on very mixed motives. She has been told, or she has told herself, if she is the eldest or the only daughter, that she will be at once, or as soon as she is quite grown up, now that she has lost her poor mother, the mistress of her father's house. She will be his close companion, will receive much of the confidence he gave his wife, and will look after his comfort and well-being as her mother was accustomed to study his interests and tastes before everything. She will entertain his guests, rule over his servants, and be treated with the peculiar respect and consideration due to his representative—one of the heads of the house. She contemplates the prospect with an innocent sense of consolation for her desolation, and a growing feeling of self-importance.

The dream of power—that is, domestic power and influence—dawns early in a woman's heart, and it is a blow to her at any age to have it rudely shattered. I have known a little child, young enough to sit on a friend's knee, bitterly aggrieved by her father's second marriage.

If such an experience can be found in a precocious child, it is almost invariably present in a girl in her teens or in an elder woman. It is an unusual, exceptional girl or woman who does not in time take some compensation for her motherless state in the sense that she is independent so far, and in the appropriation of the household authority and influence which are within her grasp. Hence her vexation and anger when they are taken from her, so that she is roused to an amount of opposition, active or passive, which she herself, and her friends for her, are perhaps too ready to attribute solely to her affection for her own mother's memory.

It is, to a large extent, the girl's, or even the woman's, ignorance and unfamiliarity with results, which causes her to covet a wife and mother's obligations. Even mature women, trained to the office, are sometimes unable to sustain its burdens, so that they stumble or fall under them. No young girl, especially, can fully and earnestly carry out the task without growing staid and sober, well-nigh depressed like a matron of twice her years, under the infliction.

It does seem hard that a girl who rages secretly, and is sometimes foolish enough to inveigh openly, against her father's second marriage, should forget that it is not infrequently entered into on her account. He is impelled to the act by the conviction that it will be an inestimable benefit to his child or children. Unquestionably, it would be absurd to say that the majority of the men who marry again are solely and disinterestedly influenced by consideration for their children, and for the deficiencies from which they suffer. It would be as reasonable to allege that women, juveniles or adults, are affected by tender jealousy for their mothers' shadowy figures, and by nothing else, when they are extremely hostile to the entrance of fresh presiding geniuses. Still, many widowers—the fathers of one girl, or of many—do marry again with the settled conviction—delusive or otherwise—that they are doing a service to their children by their second trial of matrimony. If the father has really put force upon himself to accomplish this end, he gets a poor return for his sacrifice when he finds it derided, disdained, and wholly misunderstood by the ungrateful children in whose cause it was undertaken. There are girls, womanly, wifely, motherly, while still girls, who can be safely trusted to fill responsible positions. There are other girls to whom an unoverlooked, unprotected promotion would be perilous or destructive.

I wish to mention the principal agents who, without thinking what they are doing, for the most part, maintain in a young girl the sensitive feelings which shrink and rankle, the wounded pride which resists and rebels on the advent of a step-mother. These are foolish, selfish, or inconsiderate friends on the mother's side, and old servants. Unfortunately, magnanimity, and sensible conceptions of the children's permanent interests, are not always to be met with. There are hard, displeased parents of the first wife's; impulsive, injured sisters, aunts and cousins; above all, vexed, unreasonable servants, who have little education and judgment to balance their instincts and emotions, whose standards of right and wrong, justice and injustice, are therefore less nicely adjusted. These unwise, unwary persons will keep telling the children what their own poor dear mother was like, how superior she was in innumerable respects to the present mistress. How little she would have wished to see such and such an alteration in the house, and reversal of her excellent arrangements (probably made under other conditions).

Let the step-daughter lay to heart the significant truth that it is not these dissatisfied relations of her late mother's, or these grumbling old servants, who represent her nearest relations, to whom she is to account in the first place, who will never fail or forsake her in this world, as it is not unlikely these excitable, irresponsible third persons might leave her in the lurch on the earliest provocation. Her duty, her trust, her submission, are all due to her father, and to none other in the same degree. She cannot grieve, even insult him more, than by setting herself up against his will, and covertly defying him in the new relationship he has formed for himself and her; and nothing, one may well believe, will please and touch him more than a loyal daughter's faithful, if possible, cheerful acceptance of his decision, and readiness to acknowledge, respect, and like the wife he has put by his side.

One word more. Cannot the candid, kindly step-daughter have some pitying sympathy with the stranger who, as I have said, often starts with the best intentions, who is sometimes as timid, abashed and nervous as the youngest of her step-daughters?

I have in my thoughts a couple just arrived from India, who puzzled a whole household of strangers into which they entered. The gentleman was in the prime of life, the lady was young, delicate, and gentle-looking. The news went through the house, the day after the travellers appeared, that the gentleman was gone to fetch the two children, who had been in England while their parents were in India; and friendly hearts pleased themselves with imagining the delight of the father and mother in having their children restored to them.

The pair, a little boy and girl, came with their nurse, and in a few days were the torment of the establishment, so noisy, wild, and undisciplined did they turn out.

"Why does not their mother correct them?" complained a long-suffering elderly lady to one of the servants in the house.

"Law, ma'am, she is only their step-mother!" answered the woman. "She never set eyes on them till the night before last; and, poor thing, she confessed to missus that she didn't dare to begin by finding fault with them, though they does make her head ache so with their riot, in case she should turn them against her, and they should never love her."

There might be some weakness in the acknowledgment, but it was a true woman's difficulty; it expressed the longing to make friends, the dread of offending and alienating, which we all can understand.

MOTHERS AND MOTHERS.

BY M. B. MANWELL.

It was late afternoon, in spring, when Esty Harding called. Somehow the news that she was in the house crept up to the nursery. A few minutes after she had settled herself in the deep, cushioned wicker chair, opposite Kate Venner, her old school chum, now married, and the mother of three children, there was a rushing sound down the stairs; a patter of feet; then, two small girls and a chubby boy precipitated themselves bodily upon the visitor, with shrieks of triumphant delight, and the wicker chair groaned loudly!

"You horrid little plagues! Who said you were to come here? Leave the room at once." It was Kate Venner, their mother, who peevishly spoke; but the children took no notice.

"My darlings!" A soft, rich voice crooned over the little fair heads, while Esty Harding's lips and hands were busy with caresses.

It was a pretty sight, albeit Mrs. Venner looked upon it with disdainful eyes. Esty belonged to the ideal Madonna type, which we owe to Raphael. The smooth, oval face with its dove-like expression, so tranquil, so motionless; the full-lidded eyes, the softly folded lips. It was a face that rested one to gaze upon.

"Oh Esty, what a *long* time since you were here!" cried the children in chorus.

"Isn't it, dears! And how is Pussy, and where's Toby? And has the canary begun to sing?" were questions which produced a volley of information regarding those pets.

"Nora! Margy! Get off Esty's gown. They're simply ruining your plush, Esty; and Bobby, take your fingers off her fur; they're always sticky with something. Oh, how *can* you let them claw you about, and crush your things like that! I can't make you out," Mrs. Venner spoke impatiently. "As for you, children, I wonder you're not ashamed to be so rough."

"Is we rough, Esty?" asked Margy, stopping back abashed, the tears quite ready to spring up into the clear, round eyes.

"No, you *isn't*," and a great hug told Margy something more.

"*Did* your dormouse die, Esty?" demanded Nora, eagerly.

Yes, the dormouse did; and there followed a thrilling account in the soft, round tones of how it was found, cold and stiff, in its bed of cotton-wool, the three listeners hang-

ing enthralled upon the tale, unconsciously copying each look and gesture of Esty as she related it.

"I can-*not* stand this any longer," said their impatient mother, ringing the bell. "Take those little nuisances away, nurse!" she ordered.

With muffled weeping, the rebellious little ones were hustled away, and the two ladies proceeded to drink their tea.

"Now, Esty," said Kate, comfortably, "we can have a little talk in peace, seeing we've got rid of them."

Mrs. Venner was a slender little woman, always smartly dressed, and passably good-looking but for the fretful expression of her face. She had been a bright, light-hearted girl when her husband married her, and theirs was a happy life until children came, bringing trials and troubles, terribly irksome to the pleasure-loving young mother. Nature had cut Kate out for a woman of fashion; circumstances had made her the mother of three children. A slight mistake, but not an uncommon one.

"I am sorry you sent them off, Kate," said Esty, disappointedly; "I do so enjoy them."

"Oh, I wish you had them altogether," was the irritable reply; "they drive me wild with their incessant questions. How I should like to board them out until they were grown up!"

"And how I should like to have them boarded out with me!" put in Esty with a slow smile, that ended in making her face very beautiful.

"Well, well!" and Kate looked slightly ashamed. "But now tell me, have you seen the Collingwoods' new cloaks?"

"I saw the Collingwood girls to-day, but——"

"But, of course, never noticed what they'd on. Oh, my dear old Estelle, you've no notion of fashion. I wanted to ask you how you thought I should look in one of those new cloaks; you know they are quite the latest thing. Henry thinks I'm too short to wear one; now, tell me, Esty, *seriously*, what is your opinion?" and Kate waited as anxiously for her friend's verdict as if it were upon a matter of life and death.

"I don't see what being short has got to do with wearing a long cloak," said Esty, ignorantly.

"Oh, how stupid you are!" fumed Kate, impatiently; "don't you know short women are made to look less by wearing long mantles?" No, Esty did not. "Well," went on Kate, solemnly, "the question is—am I a short woman?"

"Oh, yes!" Esty felt herself in a position to pass a ready opinion on that point.

"Then, there's an end of it!" said Kate, huffily. "Well, to change the subject, we dined with the Ratcliffes last evening—such a ridiculously pretentious dinner, nine courses, and everybody knows their circumstances. And as for Mrs. Ratcliffe's gown—Oh, Esty, did you know gloves are not worn quite so long as they were?"

"Aren't they?" said Esty, absently. "Haven't the Ratcliffes a dear little invalid girl with spine complaint?"

"Yes, they have. A dreadful affliction it must be to have a crippled child; I should hate one."

Esty looked into the fire dreamily. She was thinking how *she* should love—not hate—such a tiny sufferer.

"I suppose Mrs. Ratcliffe is wholly devoted to that helpless, patient-faced mite?" she said, wistfully.

"I don't know, I'm sure. But would you believe it, they had their parlourmaid and the housemaid dressed in a species of livery; they looked so well in it, too. Dark blue gowns with dark red facings, and high white collars and cuffs, and habit shirts with small white ties. Never saw anything neater in my life; I'm quite taken with the idea. If it wouldn't look like barefaced copying, I should put Manners into just the same livery, it really looked so distinguished. What do you say?"

"Oh, very," agreed Esty, but with that limp acquiescence on the part of a listener so irritating to a talker. "Kate," went on she, "I've often met that little Ratcliffe child, and her face haunts me. So much so that—you'll laugh at me—I bought a doll and dressed it out in long clothes—a regular baby—on purpose for her, but I don't know the parents, so the doll lies in a drawer. What should I do with it?"

"Esty, you're positively silly over children. It's easy to see you've never had the trouble of them or you'd soon be cured. I believe they're simply sent to worry people's lives out, and I wish——"

"Don't!" interrupted Esty, with nervous haste. "Bad wishes have an ugly habit of coming home to one. God has given you His most priceless gifts—little children, and, in your heart, you know you are proud of and grateful for them."

"Indeed, I'm nothing of the sort," was Kate's quick rejoinder. "I never liked children; they worry my nervous system; they interfere with my plans; and I honestly declare I wish I'd never had one. But there! Don't look so scandalised, dear old Esty; listen, now, to a piece of news. There's a wedding coming off. Shall you guess whose, or shall I tell you? Well, it's the youngest Collingwood girl; she's going to marry Mr. Gray, that widower with four children. Isn't it astonishing how desperate girls are to marry? Think of a widower—and all those children!"

"Perhaps *they* were the attraction."

"Esty!" A peal of laughter greeted the speech. "Do you mean to say that it would have been so had Mr. Gray proposed to you?"

A slight frown clouded Esty's white brow, and Kate was instantly sober. With all her worldly instincts, she ever refrained from such light speeches, knowing as she did Estelle Harding's life-story. It had all been so fair in the beginning—they were so happy, Esty and her lover—but a dire storm gathered and burst. The brave young physician proved that "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend" by drawing out with his own lips the fatal poison from a patient's wound, and then—his work in this life was over. And Esty knew that hers as a happy wife and mother—the true woman's *summum bonum*—would never begin.

"You're not vexed, Esty? I didn't mean to say it," faltered Kate; "and, if you like, dear, I'll ask Mrs. Ratcliffe to send that child here some day, and then you can come to fuss over it, and give it the doll."

"Will you really? That's so good of you, Kate," and Esty's face cleared brightly as she rose to go; and, presently, her straight, well-made figure was disappearing down the avenue which the setting sun, streaming through the trees, barred across. It was like her own life—sunlight and shade by turns, for Esty had her dark moments as well as her bright ones.

"She's a dear soul!" murmured Kate Venner, watching her friend from the window, "but so absurd about children. What a pity she will be an old maid!" Then, she added, irrelevantly, "How well Esty would look in one of the new cloaks with her splendid figure, if she only knew it—or cared!"

MOTHERS AT HOME.

BY E. M. WATERWORTH.

CHAPTER V.

OUR YOUNG PEOPLE: HOW TO HELP THEM.

They want a deal of helping I can assure you, my friends, and many of us older people often forget this. Time is laying his hand upon my head and yours; soon we shall not be able to see many hairs of the colour that pleased our parents or our husbands in our younger days. We are getting old; our children are no longer children, they are young men and women of eighteen to twenty. Now do we recognise the fact?

It has always seemed to me, as I have silently watched and studied family life, that, in five cases out of six, the parents have suffered disappointment and heartache through forgetting just this one point—their children are growing up.

All that I have said to you before has been, as I promised it should be, from my own experience; but now, I can only speak to you of what I have learnt from careful study of other people's lives, and hope that when you and I are getting old, and our children are big enough to take their place in the battle of life, we may be ready to help them, and not thwart their plans and cross their tempers by wanting still to keep them as children.

First of all, then, whatever you do, don't thwart your child's choice of work, if you can possibly help it.

"His father is a carpenter, and of course Jack will be one too;" or "There's the shop, and what can Sam do better than just take his place in it?" or "I have a capital connection in the dressmaking, and mean Janet to help me, and so keep the business in the family."

That is all well enough and reasonable enough, provided that Jack and Sam and Janet have no particular ideas of their own; but we must remember that human creatures are not like pens made by machinery. You have a box of J's and you know that each one is exactly alike, and you know what each is suited for; but a family of children, even if it be a small one, will differ entirely. Each will have its own character, its own temper, its own strong points, its own weaknesses, and it behoves the parents, so far as they can, not to force the square peg into the round hole, or the round peg into the square hole.

When the young people have no decided taste in any direction, by all means make them what you think best, but where girls or boys show a determined leaning towards some particular work, I consider that it is a parent's duty to help them to be what they desire. Many a man has gone through life doing work which he disliked, properly indeed, but with a heavy heart, never rising above common-place mediocrity, who, if he could have followed the bent of his mind, would have shone in some other trade or profession. Only a few out of the many who are put to work which they dislike have the energy and talent to cut out a path for themselves later on.

In this matter I think that the mothers are, as a rule, wiser than most of the fathers, for it is very often the children whose fathers died in their early childhood that we find placed in posts most congenial to their taste.

Let us then make up our minds to try to help our young people in their work by putting them, if possible, to such as they like.

Next comes the question of amusement. Now I am of opinion that there is nothing like a favourite hobby to keep young people out of mischief. It must rest with us whether

we allow the hobby to be kept at home, or whether we drive our girls and boys to seek it elsewhere.

Music, drawing, reading, carpentering, wood-carving, for indoor use, cycling, walking, rowing, gymnastics, for outdoor. If the home is bright, if one can sing and another paint or draw, or another has a little room in which he or she can make little ornaments for parents or friends, there is no temptation to stay idling about the streets when work is done.

Parents, as a rule, are too prone to forget that they were once young themselves. You and I, dear friends, had just the same tiresome little ways as our children have, when we were their age. We all enjoyed most that which we really ought not to have done. I'll prove it to you in two words: if your baby is extra quiet, do you not find she has got a pair of scissors or a knife to play with? If you are more than usually busy, and want your children to be more than usually quiet, what do you do? I know what I do; I just give them something which does not really belong to them, which is not a toy at all, a hat and pair of gloves of mine, a jug and cup and saucer from the kitchen—any mortal thing, so long as it is not a legitimate plaything—and they are quiet for an hour.

Yet are they so very different in this matter from what you and I were? I think not; otherwise that scene in the Garden of Eden would never have been enacted. A whole garden of lovely, delicious fruit which might be eaten was forfeited for one taste of the forbidden apple. Let us remember this very often as we train our children, especially as they are growing up, and may God help us to teach them to love us, not only as parents, but as friends; friends who, although our heads are getting white, have still young and loving hearts, ready to sympathise, *i.e.*, to feel *with* them in all their joys and sorrows.

"No followers allowed." Then please how did you and I come to be married? I wonder whether any of you know Dr. Wendell Holmes' poem on Aunt Tabitha? I am sure all sensible mothers will enjoy it, so I will quote a few lines:—

"Whatever I do, and whatever I say,
Aunt Tabitha tells me that isn't the way;
When *she* was a girl (forty summers ago)
Aunt Tabitha tells me they never did so.

How wicked we are, and how good they were then!
They kept at arm's length those detestable men;
What an era of virtue she lived in! But stay—
Were the *men* all such rogues in Aunt Tabitha's day?

If the men *were* so wicked, I'll ask my papa
How he dared to propose to my darling mamma;
Was *he* like the rest of them? Goodness! Who knows,
And what shall *I* say if a wretch should propose?"

Making allowances for the young lady's exaggeration, there is more truth in the lines than many parents would care to own. Too many of us are Aunt Tabithas. We are married ourselves, why should we take it for granted that our children and our servants should never commit the same "folly." Believe me, a young man's honest love for a good and suitable girl is more likely to do him good than harm; it will give him an object in life, and it will help him to resist temptation.

As to your daughter, although your motherly pride whispers that she ought to have looked higher, what does it matter after all if she really loves the man. Married life is like a great lumbering cart, which has to be dragged over a long, uneven road. There will be lots of rough places, and there will be many smooth; but rough or smooth the wheels must go round, and *love* is the only oil which will make them go easily.

If you sacrifice your daughter for money, the wheels may be gilt indeed, but they will stick nevertheless, and every jolt will pain her, making life a misery instead of happiness.

Needless to say that there is one subject on which all happy lovers should agree, and that is that their life here should be but a preparation for that to come. Every young man and woman should try to find a helpmeet for him or her—one who will urge the other to good and noble deeds, not a sunshine friend alone, but one whose love will deepen as shadows gather. To such an one would we not all most gladly give our son or our daughter? Happy in the thought of their happiness, and glad to think that they could truthfully say:

"Oh, we will walk this world,
Yoked in all exercise of noble end,
And so thro' those dark gates across the wild
That no man knows."

It has always seemed to me that the key-note to many discordant lives may be found in one word—*selfishness*. We mothers, if we would be worthy of the name, have need day by day, and year by year, to grow more unselfish. Having watched over our children through their helpless infancy, having cared for them in childhood, having guided them in wayward youth, we must be ready, to use an Americanism, to take a back seat when they have fallen in love, and made homes for themselves. And yet, after all, the back seat is better than it might be. We can still see and hear our darlings, we can still influence them for good, we can still give them advice (when they ask it, mind), and in their happiness we shall find our own reward.

But I have spoken as if there were no aching hearts, as if there were no sons or daughters who disappointed the fondest hopes, and despised the gentlest teaching. Alas! alas! There are but too many such in the world, and as a modern writer has truly said, "I cannot remember one instance in which the ingratitude of children has not produced wrinkles and grey hairs in the proportion of ten to one for every other sorrow of any description whatever;" grey hairs and wrinkles being but the outward sign of the inward misery caused by unnatural children.

What shall you and I do if such be our lot? I know but of one right course—silence to men and speech to God. Talking about our trouble will only make it heavier, praying about it will make it lighter, for shall we not in prayer roll the burden to the feet of Him whose Divine invitation holds good to all eternity, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

HOME-MADE TOYS AND GAMES.

If we cannot afford to buy expensive toys for our children, we may, by the outlay of a little time and thought, give them a few toys and games that will be amusing and instructive.

Save all your empty spools, and when you have a quantity, paint them different colours, and they will have a wonderful set of building blocks which can be replenished from time to time. Or the spools may represent soldiers in different coloured uniforms, or may be arranged according to kindergarten methods.

The little ones while being amused will learn to count and to distinguish colour. Many other lessons may be taught incidentally. If the kindergarten method is followed, only one colour should be given at first.

Take a smooth, glass bottle, put in one or two bright pictures, and fill the bottle with common salt, and you will have a pretty plaything for the baby. For older children a scrap-book may be made a source of pleasure and profit.

A set of anagram cards may be made by using a piece of blank cardboard or note-paper. Mark off into squares about an inch each way; print or write a letter on each square, and cut apart. Two hundred letters will be sufficient for ordinary purposes. Of these, twenty-five should be e's, twelve o's, ten a's, ten i's, four u's. T and n are most common consonants. The proper proportions of all letters may be ascertained by counting the different letters in a paragraph in a newspaper.

A great many games may be played with these cards. In the common one of anagrams, one child builds a word, mixes the letters, and gives to another to study out. A sentence may be built using capitals and punctuation marks. Each word must be kept by itself, but the order of the words changed. Another instructive game is played by placing the cards in the middle of the table, letter side down. Each player draws a card. If it chances to be a, i, or o, it is a word. Suppose the first player draws a; the next player draws n; he may take the a and make an; but the next draws m and he makes man, and so on.

Letters that are not words, and cannot be combined with any word on the table, are common property. Anyone may draw from them to build a new word. The first to get ten words "beats." The children themselves will invent games as good as any of these.

A game of author cards may be home-made, using books and authors that the children have read.

Whether we employ the kindergarten system or not, we should all adopt Frœbel's motto, "Come let us live with our children."

WHAT ALL MOTHERS SHOULD KNOW.

That over-feeding is the chief cause of cholera infantum and other forms of bowel complaint in young children.

That in summer it is often water, not milk, for which the child is crying, and that the stomach may already be dangerously burdened.

That while the natural appetite of the young is a pretty safe guide, so long as the diet is simple, rich pies and cakes and other highly-seasoned food tend to the habit of over-eating, and lay the foundation for future dyspepsia.

That the chief damage by smoking—and cigarettes are at least as bad as cigars—is done within the growing age, while the child is still under the influence of the mother, and that the harm is most serious upon that centre of life—the heart.

That the chest is packed full with the lungs and heart, and room is gained for the inflation of the lungs only by a wonderful mechanism which lifts the ribs as the breath is inhaled, and that it greatly imperils health and life to bind down the chest, especially in growing girls, whether with corsets or tight dresses.

That the abdominal cavity is similarly packed with its organs; that the liver alone extends two-thirds across it, and that tight-lacing deeply furrows the liver, sometimes cutting it in two, a thin membrane alone connecting the parts; that the full stomach is thus often pushed up against a weakened heart, and the pelvic organs are so crowded as to produce serious and permanent ill-effects.

That the lack of vitality in many children, by which they are rendered peculiarly susceptible to infectious disease, is due to a deficiency of pure air in their sleeping-rooms.

That a child's brain is not in a condition for study before its seventh year, and that when a child is precocious, there is special reason for holding it back, if it is to be saved from brain disease, future dullness, or possible imbecility.

That no growing child should fail to have at least nine or ten hours' sleep, in a well ventilated room, and that no sleep is perfect with a light in the room.

That children under seventeen should not be allowed the excitements of evening parties.

That children, from the earliest practicable age, should be trained to habits of self-control in all directions.

That every mother ought to make it a prime object to secure and maintain the fullest confidence of her children and her normal influence over them.

DRESS AND DRESSMAKING.

October, though often dull and grey, and towards the end of it downright cold, frequently rejoices in days that though short are very bright, and others that if hazy are very close and warm. Still, summer frocks look out of place, high though the temperature may be, and it is desirable to have something thin and dark, or at all events a dark skirt that can be worn sometimes with its own bodice or a jersey to match, and sometimes with a blouse. These latter kind of bodices are more in favour than ever, and there are many ways of making them as well as many suitable materials. The skirt of a white nun's-cloth frock that the owner may have grown out of, or that has shrunk from frequent washing, may be made up into one or two blouses, or a striped flannelette is inexpensive and nice-looking, to say nothing of the pretty cottons that are now so moderate in price.

I have before mentioned how very neat is the out-door attire of some of the highest people in the land. A few days ago a lady who was in the company of the Princess of Wales all day on a public occasion, and evidently on intimate terms with her, had on a fine dark-blue cloth dress, with what appeared to be a bias fold of the same all round the bottom of the skirt, but between it and the skirt was a quarter-inch fold of white cloth, just giving a little relief. A white flannel sleeveless shirt and an open jacket of the dark-blue cloth, with wide military braid edged with white cloth on the sleeves, a navy blue necktie and a dark-blue sailor hat with blue and white ribbon, completed a toilette that was perfect for the occasion, the weather, and the time of year. The majority of skirts are now made entirely without drapery, and the fulness is arranged so as to have a broad pleat in front, four kilt pleats on either side, and a full back set in in gathers. This is very useful and sensible, and though the skirt cuts into a good deal of material it can be picked to pieces another season, and renovated in a style that allows the worst pieces to be taken out. A practical dressmaker has given the following estimate for what may be called a between-seasons dress, supposing it is made at home, and the material selected from one of the north-country firms which send out patterns to be chosen from at home, or "fire-side shopping," as it is called. The buyer pays less and gets better material by far than at a shop, simply because the purchase is made direct from the manufacturer, and there are no "middle" profits of any kind.

	s.	d.
4 yards foundation linen	2	3
1 yard stiff muslin	0	4
1½ yards bodice lining	0	10½
Hooks, buttons, whalebone, etc.	1	3
6½ yards habit foulé at 1/5	9	3
½ yard velveteen, or 6 yards braid	1	9
	15	8½

The foulé should be double width, and the foundation linen is made in all dark useful colours, and slips on and off over the petticoats as easily as silk. A better material, such as cashmere, might be allowed, but even then the cost of the dress need only be a guinea, but foulé is most economical, not only on account of its price, but because it looks well longer, and, if desirable, can be turned. Cashmere has a trick of getting shiny with wear, and is not quite the same on the wrong side.

A really beautiful material which wears much better than cashmere, but is rather more expensive, is Henrietta cloth, which has a silk warp.

A dress of it made up in the early spring of the present year and worn as best for three months by a girl who cannot be idle, but has many duties to perform, looked quite fresh and new. The colour in this case was a pinkish fawn, or between fawn and heliotrope. People are very apt to think that because they make a dress up themselves the making counts for nothing, but time is money, and it takes just as long to make up a light material that gets dirty directly or has no wear in it, as it does to make the good substantial dress that lasts for months and even years, and, besides, the cost of the lining and etceteras is the same in each case. The "Henriettas" look so intrinsically good that they are quite suitable for quiet people for evening wear when required.

Our illustration shows a neat dress of the kind described, and a very useful jacket double over the chest, which can be made in any kind of dark useful cloth, lined with domette and any dyed or old silk available, or with Italian cloth.

The pattern of above jacket can be had by sending 1s. 0½d. in stamps to M. L., at the office of the Mother's Companion, and will be sent off as early as possible, though it cannot be by return of post.

Illustrated Penny Sheet Almanacs for 1891.

With numerous Illustrations.

British Workman Almanac. Animals' Friend Almanac. Band of Hope Almanac. Band of Mercy Almanac. Everyone's Almanac (Book form, 16 pp.).

London: S. W. Partridge & Co., 9, Paternoster Row, E.C.